



Reporting Health issues: What International Journalism students need to know?

Dr Trevor Cullen
Edith Cowan university
Journalism Course Coordinator



Why do we need to know about HIV ?

- Current global health epidemic
- International students from affected countries (China, India, Africa)
- Media students (journalism and Broadcast) can influence coverage in their own countries.



OUTLINE of the Talk

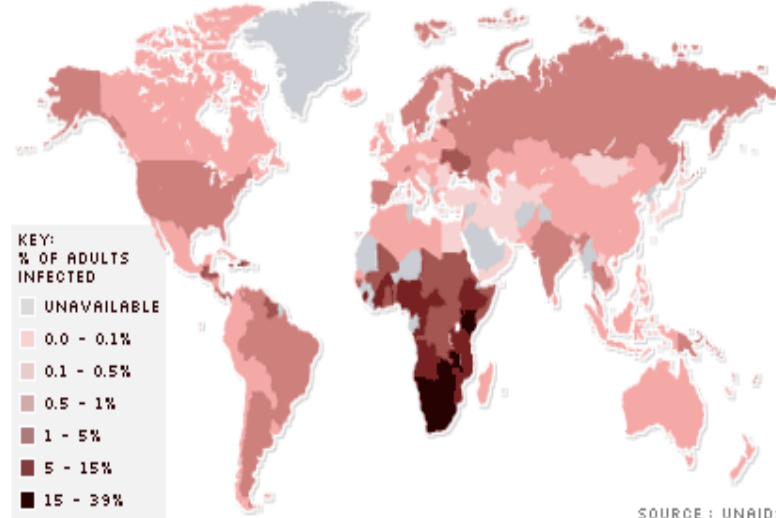
Current HIV situation - DEC 2007

Two extensive surveys on Press coverage in Southern Africa and PNG

Findings and Recommendations for Journalists and educators

Current figures - Dec 2007

WORLDWIDE HIV PREVALENCE RATES



33 million infected

25 million have died

The whole of Australia and NZ

Asia / Pacific Region



India 3.1 million

China 650,000

PNG 60,000



Figures for the Pacific

■ Australia	16,000	(0.1%)
■ New Zealand	1400	(0.1 %)
■ Fiji	1000	(0.1%)
■ PNG	60,000	(1.8%)



Part 2 - Why Press coverage?

Easier to access
Newspaper Archives

Read by
policy makers/other media



Centre for Research on AIDS Reporting



about

[Research Topics](#)
[HIV Fact File](#)
[Contact](#)



publications

[Articles](#)
[Reporting Manuals](#)
[Other](#)



quicklinks

[Resources](#)
[Links](#)



latest news

Welcome to the Centre for Research on Aids Reporting

latest facts

95% of all people with HIV/AIDS live in developing nations

AIDS will kill an estimated 70 million people over the next 20 years

HIV AIDS is the single biggest catastrophe in history



Role of the Media

Inform V Educate

- Raises awareness
- Delivers information/education?
 - Keeps the issue alive
 - Offers a public platform



First Survey Panos Institute (2004)

8 Southern African countries

Tracked Press coverage of HIV
(1981 - 2003)

Random sampling



FINDINGS

Improvement in coverage 1980s-90s

Language - more sensitive

Wider coverage Health-development

-
- Event and personality driven
 - Reactive
 - No in-house policy
 - Lack of new angles/innovation

Press coverage of HIV in PNG 1987-2006



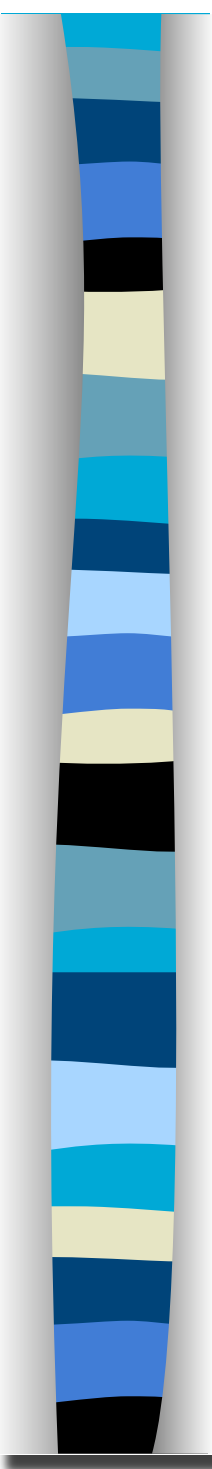
More coverage
Focus on HIV is on PNG
A few human interest stories



BUT - 20 years on (1987- 2007)

IN PNG

- No editorial policy (1998, 99, 02, 06)
- Reactive approach
- Lack of educational messages
- Stuck to figures, workshops, gov statements. donations



PNG :

Key factors for spread of HIV

- Denial
- Widespread sexual practices
- HIGHEST STI RATE IN THE WORLD
- Poorly equipped health care centres
- Insufficient testing, medicines, counseling, gov budget, staff
- No consistent political leadership

In all surveys
- Common findings

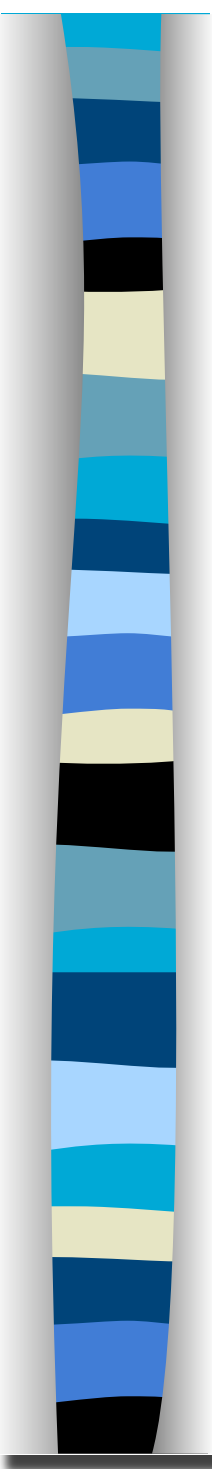


Lack of imagination
Lack of initiative
Lack of Linkage



What can we learn from current Health Communication Theories

- Psychosocial theory (benefits)
- Health belief theory (risks)
- Social cognitive theory (environment)
- Diffusion of Innovation theory (new ideas and practices)



Most significant Theoretical shift

From Individualistic model of behaviour change to advocacy for social and change.

Focus on influence of socio economic realities because people do not live in a vacuum



HIV/AIDS - Widen the Context

HIV is more than sex and stats

- **HIV - is linked to and throws a spotlight on:**

- Articles on

- Domestic violence

- Religious and cultural practices

- Sex workers practices

- Economic conditions

- Gender inequalities

- Cultural issues

- Political agendas

- Personal prejudices



Narrative Journalism

Describes how ordinary people live and what they value

Move away from celebrity features to News you can feel - News that is intimate.

Puts a human face on the disease.

Counters stigma and fear



Action plan for Journalists - HIV

Provide accurate information

Create a forum for discussion

Challenge the policy makers

Report the gaps in the story

Break down the fear and
stigma



Centre for Research on AIDS Reporting



about

[Research Topics](#)
[HIV Fact File](#)
[Contact](#)



publications

[Articles](#)
[Reporting Manuals](#)
[Other](#)



quicklinks

[Resources](#)
[Links](#)



latest news

Welcome to the Centre for Research on Aids Reporting

latest facts

95% of all people with HIV/AIDS live in developing nations

AIDS will kill an estimated 70 million people over the next 20 years

HIV/AIDS is the single biggest catastrophe in history